

Virginia Commission on Youth

STUDY OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION OPTIONS ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

November 13, 2007

10:00 a.m.

5th Floor East Conference Room
General Assembly Building

Members Present

Cynthia Cave, Dept. of Education
Arlene Cundiff, Dept. of Education
Willie Carrington, Newport News Public Schools
Sarah Geddes, Just Children
D. Patrick Lacy, Jr., Virginia School Board Association
Joyce Jones, Hopewell Public Schools Alternative Education
Tracey Jenkins, Dept. of Criminal Justice Services
The Honorable William H. Fralin, Jr., Virginia Commission on Youth

Commission on Youth Staff Members

Leah Hamaker, Cordell Hairston, Ashley Gayle

Agenda Items

I. Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Hamaker began the meeting at 10:10 a.m. with an introduction of Advisory Group members, Delegate Fralin, who is participating electronically, Commission on Youth staff and audience members. Ms. Hamaker reviewed agenda items and meeting goals.

II. A Probation Officer's Perspective on Issues Surrounding Suspended and Expelled Youth

Department of Juvenile Justice presenter did not attend.

III. Alternative Education Program Guide Draft

Ms. Hamaker referred to the Alternative Education Options 2007 study plan and discussed the limited amount of available information regarding locally-administered programs. She shared the Commission's draft *Guide for Local Alternative Education Options for Suspended and Expelled Students in the Commonwealth*. The Advisory Group indicated that the resource would be very helpful.

IV. Review of Study Activities and Next Steps

Ms. Hamaker discussed the study activities and the process for reviewing the draft recommendations which Commission on Youth staff will present to the Commission on November 20th.

V. 2007 Study Findings and Recommendations Draft

(Advisory Group suggestions and comments are shown in blue.)

Recommendation 1

Option 1 The Commission on Youth shall finalize its *Guide to Local Alternative Education Options for Disciplined Youth in the Commonwealth* and request the [Virginia Association of School Superintendents](#) to assist in disseminating it to all

interested organizations via the Internet or to employ any other cost-effective dissemination method they so chose.

Option 2 The Commission on Youth shall contact all child-serving agencies and inform them of the availability of the *Guide to Local Alternative Education Options for Disciplined Youth* in the Commonwealth. The Commission will also request the Secretariats of Health and Human Resources, Public Safety, and Education, as well as all affected agencies that deliver services to children, to link this report on their websites.

Option 3 The Virginia Department of Education, in cooperation with the Virginia Alternative Education Association, will continue to collect data on locally administered alternative education programs. Data collected will include the number of students served, service needs, funding, components of the programs, and any other information that evaluates both the performance of the programs and the students served by the program. This information will be submitted **biennially** to the General Assembly.

The Advisory Group endorsed the three options for Recommendation 1 and suggested that data continue to be updated by the Department of Education. The Advisory Group also suggested that both private and regional programs be added. The Advisory Group's recommended revisions to the draft Options 1, 2 and 3 are shown in blue:

Recommendation 2

Option 1 The Virginia Department of Education will include additional information on appropriate reporting and notification of law enforcement authorities on incidents of discipline, crime, and violence in its annual *Comprehensive User Guide for Discipline, Crime, and Violence (DCV) Data Collection and Submission*. Such information will offer guidance on the reporting elements, both mandatory and permissive, and include information on appropriate referral of student discipline incidents to law enforcement.

Option 2 The Virginia Department of Education, along with the Virginia School Board Association, and the Superintendents-Judges Liaison Committee, will provide information to school divisions about the appropriate referral of student discipline incidents to law enforcement officials. Such training will include instruction on mandatory and permissive reporting requirements as well as the appropriate referral of student discipline incidents to law enforcement.

Option 3 The Virginia Department of Education, in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, will collect information on the number of youth referred by schools to law enforcement officials. Information collected will include the nature of the offense and the final disposition of the case. A report on this activity will be submitted to the General Assembly and the Commission on Youth prior to the 2009 General Assembly Session.

The Advisory Group did not endorse any of the options for Recommendation 2, but expressed interest in Option 2 dealing with School Resource Officers. Ms Hamaker said she would investigate this and report back to the Advisory Group.

Recommendation 3

Request the Department of Education to evaluate methods for the Commonwealth to offer educational services for any student who has been long-term suspended or expelled from school. Such a study shall include a review of current school divisions' practices, as well as alternatives to long-term suspension or expulsion. Such a study will consider the school crisis management plans established by school divisions, as well as other requirements set forth in state and federal law. A report on this activity will be submitted to the General Assembly and the Commission on Youth prior to the 2009 General Assembly Session.

The Advisory Group opted to review this recommendation further. The Advisory Group would also like to look into more resources available for parents. Delegate Fralin commented on financial support for students who opted to attend private alternative education programs. Ms. Hamaker said she would investigate this and report back to the Advisory Group.

Recommendation 4

Option 1 Request that the Virginia Department of Education establish guidelines for statewide implementation of Student Assistance Programs (SAPs). The guidelines for SAP will be shared with school divisions to ensure consistent and uniform application and implementation of SAPs, based on best practices.

Option 2 Request a budget amendment for the Virginia Department of Education to construct a database to capture data on utilization of SAPs in Virginia. Such a database will allow for ongoing assessment of the efficacy of SAPs and for the development of a framework to guide future evaluations.

Option 3 Request the Virginia Department of Education to establish a plan for an endorsement program for SAP coordinators and core teams. Such a plan will be established and set forth in the SAP guidelines established by the Department.

The Advisory Group endorsed this recommendation and agreed on Student Assistance Programs (SAPs). The Advisory Group sought clarification that this recommendation would not be a mandate.

Recommendation 5

Option 1 Introduce a budget amendment for the statewide implementation of effective school-wide discipline programs including training, technical support, and staffing needs.

Option 2 Request the Virginia Department of Education to develop a plan, including budgetary requirements, for the statewide implementation of effective schoolwide discipline programs. This plan will be submitted prior to the 2009 General Assembly, as well as to the Senate Finance Committee, House Appropriations Committee, and to the Commission on Youth.

Option 3 Request that the Virginia Department of Education require schools with a long-term suspension rate exceeding 12% to implement an effective schoolwide discipline program.

The Advisory Group endorsed this recommendation, but suggested the language be changed to reflect data-driven best practices. The Advisory Group noted that Option 2 was labor intensive and that Option 3 could possibly unfairly penalize good schools due to a bad year. Ms Hamaker will reword these to clarify that they are not mandates.

Recommendation 6

Request the Virginia Alternative Education Association to research alternative education definitions established by the National Education Association. Request that the Virginia Alternative Education Association to report its progress and any suggested language to the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Commission on Youth prior to the 2009 Session of the General Assembly.

The Advisory Group endorsed this recommendation, suggesting that a general working definition of Alternative Education is greatly needed. The Advisory Group suggested an additional (new) recommendation.

Request the Commission on Youth to continue its Advisory Group on Alternative Education Options and to invite agency representatives from all child-serving agencies. The Advisory Group will work to evaluate gaps in service in alternative education placements as well as the reasons that students are not offered educational services. A report on the findings from the Advisory Group will be made to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2009 General Assembly Session.

VI. Adjourn

Commission on Youth staff will send a revised working draft to the Advisory Group. This revised draft will be presented at the Virginia Commission on Youth's meeting on November 20. Comments from Advisory Members will need to be submitted in writing. The Commission will take action on the study recommendations at its December 5 meeting

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.